

Assessing the Conservation Order for Light Geese in the Atlantic Flyway in 2018



Submitted in Fulfillment of the Reporting Requirements of the Conservation Order on Behalf of
the Participating States in the Atlantic Flyway

Snow Goose, Brant, and Swan Committee of the Atlantic Flyway Council

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In 2018, eight Atlantic Flyway states participated in the conservation order (CO) on light geese that was established by the light goose final rule (Federal Register Vol. 73, no 227) (Table 1). States differed in their administration of the CO season. All of the states, except for New York, required participants to obtain a permit to participate. Permits were obtained either online or through the mail. Maryland also issued permits through their automated licensing system. Maryland (\$5) and New Jersey (\$2) charged a fee for the permit. Pennsylvania, Delaware, Vermont, North Carolina and Virginia issued free permits. Participation in New York was complimentary of existing waterfowl hunting privileges.

Hunter activity was solicited through a paper hunting diary and/or online data entry administered by each state agency. Reporting of activity, regardless of participation, was required in six states that issued permits. New York surveyed a sample of people who registered in the Harvest Information Program (HIP) to estimate participation and harvest. Likewise, Maryland sampled a portion of hunters that had obtained their Snow Goose Conservation Order Permit. Follow up letters, emails, or phone calls to non-respondents were conducted in most states.

Table 1. 2018 “Light Goose” harvest regulations in Atlantic Flyway states participating in the snow goose conservation order.

State	Participate in CO in 2018?	Special Measures outside CO?	CO Dates	Special Measures in CO	Bag/Possession Limit	Participation requirements
Vermont	Yes	No	11 March - 27 April	All	15/None	Free permit
New York	Yes	Yes ¹	16 January - 15 April	All	25/None	Covered under existing waterfowl hunting privileges
New Jersey	Yes	No	16 February - 7 April	All	None/None	\$2 permit
Delaware	Yes	No	12 February -13 April	All	None/None	Free Permit
Pennsylvania	Yes	No	22 January – 20 April (SJB zone), 1 February – 20 April (AP zone), 26 February - 20 April (RP zone)	Extended hours, e-calls	25/None	Free Permit
Maryland	Yes – in AP goose zone	No	27 November – 9 December, 5 – 9 February, 12 February - 14 April	All	None/None	\$5 permit
Virginia	Yes – in AP goose zone	No	1 February - 5 April	All	None/None	Free Permit
North Carolina	Yes	No	12 February – 31 March	All	None/None	Free Permit

¹ New York elected to use unplugged guns and electronic calls outside of the special CO, but within the normal light goose hunting frameworks.

Harvest and Hunter Participation

Six states (DE, NJ, PA, VA, NC and VT) utilized a permit system and sampled all hunters to estimate hunter effort and harvest. In these states, 4,296 permits were issued (Table 2), and 762 hunter reports were returned, for a response rate of 18%. In these states, an estimated 38% of all permit holders participated in the CO (n = 1,638). Maryland sampled a proportion (15%) of their permittees, and received responses from 25% of those sampled. Maryland estimated that 24% of all permittees (798) participated in the CO. In New York, a harvest survey was sent to 3,000 hunters, including every HIP registrant who said they had bagged a snow goose in 2017 (n=1,810). In New York, survey response rate was 37%, and the estimated number of participants was 1,528.

Flyway-wide, an estimated 3,964 hunters participated in the CO in 2018, down 12% from the previous year. The estimated retrieved flyway harvest of light geese was 48,802 with an additional 2,099 birds shot and lost (Figure 1, Table 2). Total retrieved harvest in 2018 was 10% higher than the 2017 estimate, but 1% lower than the past 9-year average (49,373) (Figure 1). The number of days hunted in 2018 was 9% lower than 2017 (Figure 1), and also 9% lower than the past 9-year average (17,210).

Table 2. Hunter activity and estimated harvest in the Atlantic Flyway Light Goose Conservation Order, 2018.

State	Permits Issued	Permits Returned	Response Rate	# of Hunters	Percent Participate	Days Hunted	Geese Shot and Retrieved	Geese Shot and Lost
Delaware	668	73	11%	503	75%	1,647	6,506	183
New Jersey	783	99	13%	650	83%	1,830	7,055	847
North Carolina	749	106	14%	63	59%	122	265	13
Pennsylvania	1,634	389	24%	260	16%	770	1,170	31
Virginia	339	52	15%	143	42%	391	554	39
Vermont	123	44	36%	19	15%	141	30	0
Total from 6 states that sampled all permit holders	4,296	762	18%	1,638	38%	4,901	15,580	1,113
Maryland ²	3,324			798	24%	3,511	12,688	183
Total from 7 states that issued special permits	7,620			2,436	36%	8,412	28,268	1,296
New York ³				1,528		7,250	20,534	803
Atlantic Flyway Total				3,964		15,662	48,802	2,099

¹ Maryland sampled a portion (500 or 15%) of their special permit holders.

³ In New York, all hunters holding existing waterfowl hunting privileges may participate in the Conservation Order. New York sampled 3,000 individuals registered in HIP for the 2017-18 season. This included all registrants that indicated they had bagged one or more snow geese in 2017 and a proportion that did not hunt or were unsuccessful for snow geese the previous year.

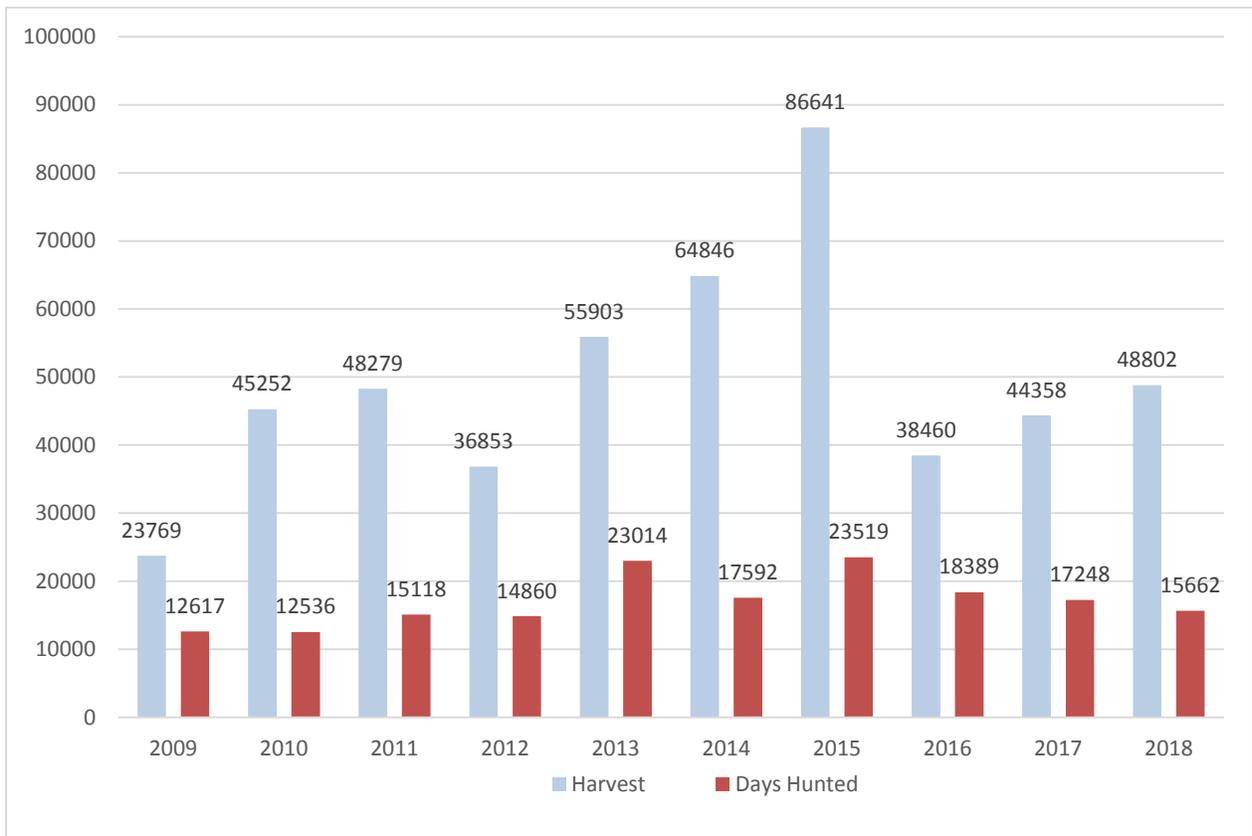


Figure 1. Retrieved harvest and number of days hunted in the Light Goose Conservation Order in the Atlantic Flyway, 2009-2018.